

THE PLAIN VIEW

JANUARY 1948

The Profit Motive: What is wrong with it?

E. J. B. LLOYD

How Christian is England?

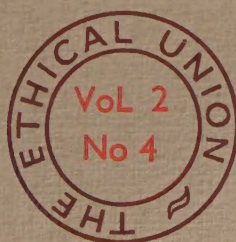
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A HUMANIST JOURNAL CONCERNED WITH HUMAN RELATIONS AND WITH
THE QUALITY OF LIVING

Οὐδεν ἱκανον ὦ ὀλιγον το ἱκανον

—EPICURUS

Nothing is sufficient for him to whom what is sufficient seems little

UBERTATES ET COPIAE VIRTUTIS

—CICERO

the productiveness and the resources of human quality

THIS IS THAT WHICH WILL INDEED DIGNIFY AND EXALT KNOWLEDGE, IF
CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION MAY BE MORE NEARLY AND STRAITLY
CONJOINED AND UNITED TOGETHER THAN THEY HAVE BEEN; A
CONJUNCTION LIKE UNTO THAT OF THE TWO HIGHEST PLANETS, SATURN
THE PLANET OF REST AND CONTEMPLATION, AND JUPITER, THE PLANET
OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACTION.

—BACON

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COMMENTARY

TWO WORLDS. In 1917 Russians stood with sticks in their hands against the German armament. The memory of their plight put steam into the economic engines blue-printed in successive Soviet plans. Certainly the Party dictatorship has forced the pace and driven the Russians ruthlessly along this road, for a hostile world drove the regime to build up industrial power rapidly to save its existence. But it was a road along which any government had to take them. Russia had to catch up with contemporary industrial powers. A people with such resources could not remain a prey. So that when Russia looms so large on the immediate scene and in the more distant prospect, is such a figure and a power in the world to-day, it is natural to credit her greatness to the dictatorship which has ruled during 30 years; but whether or not a different government might have raised her national power to an even greater height is an open speculation. Certainly there have been costly mistakes, heavy setbacks, and bitter losses to offset the real achievements; and it might not be wholly unreasonable to lay the guilt on the regime and give the credit to the Russian people.

When the war finished there was very little disposition in the West to make any such distinction. Admiration and gratitude attached themselves to the Soviet Union as such. What foreseeable end to the dominion of Hitler had there been until his land forces began to spend themselves in the spaces of Russia upon the Russian masses? War comradeship and the appalling total of Russian suffering extinguished criticism and transformed hostility. The alienation of this goodwill by the subsequent course of Soviet policy and propaganda has for some time been the prevailing topic of comment and discussion and is commonly regarded as having gone too far for any hope of reconciliation. There is small comfort for those who think that close co-operation in the making of one world is immediately possible. Soviet penetration runs east and west; the war is on in Greece and China; in France and Italy, Communist direct action aims a killing blow at democratic government; on a world-wide front, the war of nerves has divided mankind into two camps, and the small hope of mutual understanding and reconciliation diminishes daily. The intransigence of the Soviet Union, the determination of Stalin to pursue his own course, to dictate the terms on which he will co-operate, the resolve to force the issue in every way calculated to drive mankind into two camps, this policy which has puzzled, alarmed, and estranged all but fanatical adherents of the Soviet Union in the West has evoked

various attempts at explanation. For example: fear of America, stimulated by American provocation; confidence in her own resources and self-sufficiency as potentially the greatest power in the world; confidence in the coming world triumph of Communism based upon ideological certainty of the inevitable collapse of capitalist economies and the actual gains and practical opportunities of Communist parties in Europe as a result of the war; sheer diplomatic ineptitude and failure to appreciate the realities of Western life; the need of the regime, for its own security, to project upon an external enemy internal resentment and fear. There is evidence for all these explanations, and none of them is sufficient in itself. But there are no surprises in present Soviet policies for those who know Marxist ideology and have read history. The question is, what response shall we make? Ten years ago the shape things are taking now would have looked like inevitable war. To-day that is not likely to be the immediate outcome: time is on our side if we make wise and energetic use of it.

We must study and understand Communism; and we must build up and consummate the social democracy which Communists affect to despise and most of all fear. There need be no appeasement, and we can be serene about the ultimate outcome. Let us neither deceive ourselves nor get into a panic, but see the thing for what it is. Communism (the phrase is Mussolini's definition of Fascism) is "the embodied will to power." One can distinguish between the programmes; one can say that Communism is power exerted in the interests of the masses who are otherwise inevitably nothing other than exploited labour. That is Communist theory. Recently the attention of the West has been focussed on prominent opposition politicians in Communist-controlled countries who have been eliminated; and it has been easy for our misguided enthusiasts to say merely that they are on the side of the masses whatever the fate of such prominent professional persons. It is not easy to deal so lightly with the fate of some 20,000,000 slaves under the Soviet regime, including some of the nation's best talent and patriotic spirit. Of course it is easy to deny their existence. Stalin had to eliminate rivals in the Party, to carry out nation-wide purges of their possible adherents, to rely solely on yes-men and govern by the spy, the bully, and the concentration camp. That is what revolution leads to. It would not have been different had Trotsky triumphed. Nor was the struggle for absolute power within the Party wholly and solely a cynical matter of personal ambitions. There were genuine differences of theory and policy, and more than once the sharp exigencies of a critical national situation forced the issue. Stalin's ruthlessness has not been lacking in statesman-

ship. Nevertheless, to identify the interests of the Russian masses with the interests of Stalin's regime or the interests of the masses anywhere with those of the Communist parties is an altogether naïve assumption: it involves assumptions at variance with thousands of years of human experience. Social democracy which, like the profession of Communism, aims at achieving a homogeneous people in a quasi-unanimous and quasi-equalitarian society, but by following in good faith accepted legal procedures, is feared and detested by Communists because by the assumptions of their creed it cannot succeed, and in so far as it does succeed it takes the wind out of their sails. It is proved that they preferred Hitler in Germany; it is most probable that they prefer de Gaulle in France. Now is the time for social democrats to rouse and rally and nerve moderate people to denounce and resist totalitarian dictatorships from Right or Left as a crime against humanity, destroying the conditions of mutual trust and therefore abolishing morality and the larger hopes of mankind. If social democracy can attain its proper goals in this country, that will be the modern way of saving ourselves by our exertions and (part of) Europe by our example. Soviet diplomacy can be brought to realistic compromise and co-operation, whether the regime falls or not, when by increasing strength fears have been surmounted and when it has become clear that the other half of the world is not under Fascist dictatorships but is in the hands of successful social democracies invulnerable to Communist penetration. But first the Communist bid will be made and it will be our fault as well as our disaster if it does succeed.

Therefore it would seem wise to accept the immediate inevitability of two worlds in order to handle the situation in a way that will make possible the achievement of one world later. The realism which recognizes the ruthless exclusiveness and self-confident infallibility of Communism (which can therefore never be safely dealt with on any other assumptions) should also recognize that Communist parties are formally committed to the interests of the masses and are capable of energetic constructive policies, and in some countries are the only real alternative to fascism, and that political democracy is not finally and for ever safe even in this country in which it has been formed by so many favourable historical factors. Let formal democracy in the West achieve material democracy on its own premises: there is no other answer to Communism. If we do that without threatening or reproaching Soviet Communism, and genuinely strive to reach practical accommodations at those points and in those theatres where there is a clash of interests, and to develop mutually helpful trade arrange-

ments, striving by every practical means to avoid the decline of Western Europe into client States chronically dependent upon America, with improving conditions there is likely to come a détente and the renewal of practicable ideals. It is the blindest folly to think either of war or of appeasement.

U.N.E.S.C.O. Although the real effectiveness of the subsidiary organs of international co-operation, like FAO and UNESCO, depends upon genuine and productive international collaboration in the Assembly and Security Council, nevertheless, short of the independent success which by its constitution the ILO was enabled to achieve before the war, there is much which these institutions may do to prove their value; and to this extent the hopes which are bound up with them depend upon the wisdom and energy of their Directors. Unfortunately, Mr. Huxley seems to have made the mistake of attempting too much in the proposals which he has made for UNESCO. The former Committee for Intellectual Co-operation, which served the League of Nations as UNESCO serves UNO, fell into contempt with some, with H. G. Wells, for example, for its "so pitifully minor activities." But there is equal contempt for the folly of grandiose programmes, and Mr. Wells would probably have made the same mistake as Mr. Huxley. Most certainly UNESCO provides a compelling opportunity for really imaginative constructive work in this critical period of world history, such as the C.I.C. never dreamed of; but that is all the more reason for disappointment that Mr. Huxley is so unrealistic and dreams of tackling every problem that seems important and falls within the extensive reference of education, science and culture. It is, of course, the embarrassing refusal of "one world" to be united in outlook and purpose which puts him in a hurry to achieve a synthesis in time to forestall open conflict. It is a forlorn hope, and the attempt is simple-minded. The job can be tackled piecemeal: there are enough obvious targets and some not so obvious which can be aimed at without elaborate justification by appeal to abstract principle which Mr. Huxley seems to think necessary. The levelling up of educational, scientific, and cultural facilities in all backward sectors, to "let in light on the world's dark areas," is one to which he rightly gives priority. It is in the tradition of such international organizations, is their primary function, and a start has already been made by UNESCO with the published report, *Fundamental Education*, to be followed by the setting up of a permanent panel of experts on "fundamental education" available to any country which seeks advice on the problem. The report raises more problems than it solves, but it is a line which UNESCO

can profitably pursue, for although questions of ultimate philosophy and government policy loom in the background, the foreground is filled by the practical problems which can best be tackled in detachment from these questions by an independent international body. It is to be hoped that UNESCO will also attempt a comparative study of education in the more advanced countries, both for the sake of information and also with a view to approaching the establishment of standards and types of modern education appropriate to specific purposes or persons. Such comparative studies of practical problems common to modern civilization which are not likely to be undertaken within any one country are more appropriate to the function of UNESCO than is independent work in any of the special fields of thought or research. Let UNESCO be rather concerned to stimulate and facilitate the application of the sciences and the arts to human life, and leave philosophies and theoretical studies to the nations. It will earn increasing respect by practical services, and only ridicule by pursuing some of the projects which Mr. Huxley has proposed. Perhaps it was not a bad thing that the British amendment to increase the 1947 Budget was defeated, for UNESCO, during its first year's operations, has been compelled by its finances to put first things first.

NAMES. Of all the arbitrary acts which men commit in none are they more arbitrary than in the naming of things. Of course, in a sense there can be nothing arbitrary about it, for if a name is merely a mark of identity, any name will do that serves the purpose. The London County Council some years ago, in assigning a unique name to every street and passage, rationalized the identification of places in the county as reasonably as could be expected of Englishmen. That is all very well, but on this principle any set of vocables will do, however outlandish, and on the same principle a name is not adequately a name unless it is unique. So pressed, the principle is hardly tolerable and gives way to other considerations. We name our homes after fond memories or hopes, our children after admired persons in life or fiction, our pets by simple endearing sounds; and many such names become attractive and fashionable and spread like measles. Although the naming of particular things cannot pretend to the philosophical dignity of the task confided to the first Adam, there is some responsibility in it, as will be readily conceded by those who would recognize the frivolity of calling a new home *Y-Wurry* or a cleaning establishment *Nu-Pin*. It would be silly to say that there is a right name for everything, but not so silly to say that there are determinants in every case which help to indicate an appropriate choice. The

baby may be called by a name which the mother thinks is a pretty one, but there have been other ideas about it. Not that we can hope to revive and sustain the Biblical grand manner of calling the child by some inspired name commemorating an event or prophesying a destiny; and the primitive interest in naming a man by some personal quality, as Hawk-eye, or peculiarity, as Longshanks, can survive only in nicknames. It might be more rational to wait until the world sees what manner of person a man is before giving him a name, but in these days that would be less likely to revive the picturesque than to institute the scientific, and we might find ourselves compelled to bear the label appropriate to our presumed physical or psychological type. Better the anonymity of mere syllables. It is not the best of all possible worlds, but it can be made worse. We can cheerfully digest a few nauseous bits and many insipidities if the alternative is a diet of chemicals. Nevertheless, short of rationalist excesses, a thought more responsibility in the matter might be recommended. There is, for example, the question of a man's memory. There may be seven-tenths of enthusiastic admiration in naming one's son Franklin D. Roosevelt Jones. But what is to be said when a battered barge sails into view bearing the proud name of Cicero, deriving not from an unheard-of Roman but from a neighbour's dog? Perhaps the great man himself would not have been altogether displeased to recognize in the ignorance of this perpetuation of his name evident satisfaction of his own aspiration to do something to show that he had lived. "Quoniam diu vixisse denegatur, aliquid faciamus quo possimus ostendere nos vixisse."

THE PROFIT MOTIVE: WHAT IS WRONG WITH IT?

[This article by Mr. E. J. B. Lloyd is the fifth in a series on the profit motive in trade and industry to-day, which is being published in "The Plain View."]

Social Motivation

WE certainly live in stirring economic times. Rival economic theories no longer have to await the arbitrament of intellectual conviction. We can now see them working out in practice, and, as always, the acid test of any theory is whether it really works. In many directions we now have the benefit, or otherwise of that experience. For example, how often during the war did we hear the complaint, often framed in the form of a political theory, that if we could so easily find so many billions to finance the war, why was it impossible in peace time to raise even more billions to pay for schemes of social betterment? After the first war it was difficult to convince such theorists that if a country chooses literally to blow to smithereens on the battlefield the accumulated wealth which might otherwise have been used for more productive purposes, those capital resources really have been destroyed and must be replaced by hard work and saving before they can be made available to finance social improvements. At the end of the first war we still had enough left of our 19th century legacy to mask the brutal force of such axiomatic truths; and although between the wars the financial machinery was beginning to creak, it was not until the second world war had completed the process that this hard, unpleasant fact has been brought violently home to every member of our population. Accordingly, if the financial crisis has done nothing else, it must surely have demonstrated to all the simple economic home-truth that you cannot eat your cake and have it, and that an impoverished nation has no inexhaustible fund from which all forms of social service can be financed. So perhaps for a little we may hear no more of that particular fallacy.

Next we find the profit motive not merely under attack, but regarded almost as a sign of moral obliquity in much the same way as sex was treated in the last century. For instance, it is noticeable that for the Trade Union Movement, Public Enemy No. 1 and the butt for whom they reserve their choicest abuse, is no longer, as we might expect, the large combine or monopoly. It is the small independent trader who prompted by the profit motive and with some ambition to be his own master, dares to set up in trade for himself. Again, it is not difficult to detect as a common factor in various policies adopted by the present Government, a determina-

tion to eliminate any possibility of private profit to anyone, whether or not from the national point of view the policy itself was the most efficient way of attaining the object desired.

We are told by the Prime Minister and others that as an incentive the profit motive is to be superseded by some form of "social motivation," whatever that expression may mean. It trips very smoothly off the tongue but its precise connotation is not easy to determine. In any event, whatever meaning the words may be intended to convey, let us see how the theory works out in practice. If social motivation means that the workers are going to be spurred to increase output by a sense of working for the community instead of for themselves or their families, it does not seem to be working out that way in the coal mines. It may, of course, be too early to judge, but so far all that has happened is that prices to the consumer, i.e., the rest of the community, have gone up while output has barely broken level. The miners cannot have realized yet that, to quote Mr. Morrison, they are now public servants. This is not to claim, of course, that all was well with the coalfields before. It says no more than this, that experience so far does entitle a consumer to question very seriously the assumption that State ownership in itself will so stimulate the miners as to lead to an immediate increase in productivity.

Again, we have it on the authority of Professor Sargant Florence that in the building industry the output of the small sub-contractor is superior to that of the time-wage labourer. It would seem that the Minister of Health had other views and preferred to pin his faith to social motivation among the workers and to the drive and energy of Local Authorities. With what result? Are we getting the houses we so urgently need? It does not look like it. And even Mr. Bevan has had to complain that under the influence of social motivation the rate of bricklaying has fallen to shockingly low levels. Once more, this does not mean that unrestricted private enterprise, however successful it may have been between the wars in erecting houses, would necessarily have provided the right houses in the right places and at the right prices in to-day's conditions. It merely says that nothing has happened so far to suggest that public ownership plus social motivation in the hearts of building trade employees either have already or will ever produce the houses which the nation wants.

As a contrast it may be apposite at this point to refer to the experience of the building industry in America to which the *Economist* recently drew attention. At the time when price control was removed from the generality of business in that country this industry was the only one in which controls continued to operate.

It may or may not have been a coincidence that it was also the only one which did not share the general upswing in production that followed. On the other hand when controls were recently removed from this industry as well, constructional activities responded immediately and are now showing a rate of increase in excess of the average for the rest of the country.

Indeed, if at this point and after examining how it seems to work in practice, one is tempted to ask what precisely is the end and purpose of this so-called social motivation, one is almost forced to the conclusion that the interests of the consumer do not appear anywhere in the picture at all. Up to the present this all-embracing enthusiasm for serving the community among the workers in a given trade appears to mean maximizing the wages and working conditions of those engaged in that particular trade at the expense of the rest of the community. And as "consumer" and "community" are only two different ways of describing the same person or body of persons, it follows that if the miners and bricklayers may be regarded as typical, either they are not being influenced by social motivation or social motivation just does not produce the goods. For from the angle of the consumer, who after all is the person who ultimately matters, the acid test of any system or incentive is whether or not it is going to produce cheap abundance either in general or in any given class of merchandise. Now if, as Mr. Attlee says, social motivation is to replace the profit motive, then the answer is that it has not in practice satisfied that test so far and the consumer may be pardoned for doubting whether it ever will.

Moreover, while everyone is in favour of raising wages and improving working conditions, let us not forget that the cost involved must and can only come out of the final selling price of the product and that, as Sir Stafford Cripps keeps on telling us, we must export or die. What happens when social motivation hits the export trade is well exemplified by the behaviour of the Chairman of the C.P.R. He came over to this country full of goodwill some months ago to place orders for one or more passenger liners. He has returned empty-handed because his Company simply could not afford to pay British prices for the construction of tonnage. Hence, it is to be hoped that somehow or other care will be taken to ensure that industry is not socially motivated out of existence.

But perhaps as a nation in whose veins the blood of pioneers and merchant adventurers may still flow, even as a trickle, we may not provide the right experimental medium for social motivation. Let us see whether it has worked any better in Russia—its spiritual home. It is not easy to form a balanced judgment about what

goes on behind the iron curtain, but most reports agree on the following essential particulars:—

- (1) That after 30 years of the experiment the lot of the toiling masses, as they have come to be known, is certainly no better, and if anything rather worse than in Czarist days. (In passing it is curious to note that in Russia the masses always “toil,” whereas in this country the working classes merely “work.”)
- (2) That their standard of life is incomparably lower than their opposite numbers who are oppressed by a soulless capitalism on our side of the curtain: and it does not really advance the argument to say that it always has been.
- (3) That the dividing line between the Have’s and the Have Not’s is even sharper than it used to be, the only difference being that by a strange coincidence the Have’s now happen to be the members of the political party which exercises totalitarian power.

If this is a fair picture, then it would appear to confirm that even in the soil in which it is most likely to be fruitful, social motivation has not in fact led to cheap abundance any more than it has had that result in this country. In other words and taking as our test not what ought to happen nor what one would like to see happen but simply how the theory does in fact work out in practice, it is fair to say that to look no further than the contrasting experience of the building trades in America and this country, the profit motive does somehow produce results, whereas social motivation, whether in this country or anywhere else, does nothing of the sort. To borrow Mr. Churchill’s metaphor, when you remove the profit motive you remove the mainspring and the clock will not go. Nor should this really be surprising, for what is being uprooted is a fundamental instinct of human nature. Trading in one form or another is as old as man himself, and trading without a profit motive is a contradiction in terms. To trade is to secure some form of economic advantage, though not necessarily an unfair advantage, from the exchange transaction into which the trader enters. From the simplest forms of barter up to the highly complex system of international trade through the medium of money, the whole end and purpose of trade is to make a profit. If any attempt is made to remove the profit motive from trade, not only is the whole process emasculated, but it is replaced by something quite different in kind and not merely in degree, namely Civil Service administration. And what better proof of this could be provided than the whole set-up, as we now see it in operation, of the coal industry under nationalization. Already there is the same over-centralization, the same frustration of form-filling, the same

difficulty of getting any decision, however trivial—in a word the diametrical opposites of all the fundamental principles of efficient business administration.

So much for Social Motivation.

Imperfect Competition

How then does the profit motive work in theory and in practice? And here we are at no loss for any amount of theory. Ever since the days of Adam Smith economists have busied themselves trying to analyse the mind and motives of the capitalist entrepreneur, and the further they get away from Adam Smith the less touch do they appear to maintain with reality. Indeed any managing director to-day would be hard put to it to recognize either himself or his motives as they are described by the modern economist. If one may take as typical of current economic thought the article contributed by Mr. Maurice Dobb to this series, it would seem that economists, as a result of their obsession with the theory of monopoly, have now brought themselves to believe that the business world goes round in a state of what they call "imperfect competition." We are told that only in the very rare instance does competition operate perfectly. For the rest of the business community profit operates as a motive force towards restriction of output. In the generality of cases, therefore, what the wicked capitalist does, according to this view, is to take a large percentage of profit on a reduced turnover, thereby acting to the disadvantage of the consumer and also, it is claimed, to the detriment of his workpeople.

To bolster up this theory it is maintained that what advertising and salesmanship do is to create a privileged market for a particular type of product in which the seller can then exercise monopoly power. Such contentions are grotesquely at variance with everyday business experience and if they were taken seriously would tend to make the modern publicity expert explode with apoplexy. How anybody can solemnly maintain that the purpose of a publicity campaign is ultimately not to increase but to reduce sales, so that when the product is established, a larger profit can be secured from a smaller output, is almost beyond the belief of anyone who has had five minutes' experience of business realities. It assumes that a customer, once secured by advertising or any other form of sales promotion, is a customer for life, and that as soon as he has established a satisfactory level of turnover for his product, the managing director can then sit back and watch his business grow by its own momentum. Never was there a greater fallacy than to believe that any business, no matter how successful, can remain static. If it does not progress, it inevitably declines, and it can only progress if the

quality of its product in relation to price and many other factors remain competitive. Even in to-day's world of price control and limited sources of supply, the customer's freedom of choice is still for the producer and retailer a stern reality; and when it is exercised, it is invariably evidence that there is something wrong with the goods, with the management, with the service, or with one or other of the factors on which commercial success depends.

It is just plain nonsense to assert that throughout the business world as a whole there is any bias towards restriction of output. As a generalization it was certainly not true between the wars and it corresponds less than ever to the facts to-day. It takes many sorts to make a world, and so long as a totalitarian dictator cannot canalize our wants into certain pre-defined channels, it takes many different types of trade to satisfy these wants. But it is no use attempting to regard the economic considerations which apply to commodities that are valuable mainly because of their scarcity, e.g., diamonds or Rolls Royces, as though they were typical of the profit motive or of the capitalist system generally. Within the limits of such a paper as this one can only deal with the profit motive in so far as it operates in the mass production and distribution of goods which are in normal everyday demand.

Mass Production and Retail Distribution

These two main categories of commercial activity have different but quite characteristic ways of handling profit, and this has not been altered fundamentally by the Price Control legislation which has operated since 1939. In both cases, subject sometimes to ceiling prices, this has controlled the percentage degree of gross profit which could be earned without affecting the method of calculating or allowing for it in the selling price. For the general run of manufacturers who adopt mass production methods, the familiar cost-plus system is the normal method of operation, that is to say, the costs of raw material, production, wages, etc., as well as overheads for rent, rates and management, are by scientific costing methods all included in cost and to that figure some given percentage—six per cent., eight per cent., or ten per cent., according to the character of the merchandise—is added for profit before arriving at the selling price. Where any such system is in operation, any special restriction on output is the very antithesis of what is meant by the profit motive. On the contrary, every possible incentive is applied to maximizing output to the utmost limit of capacity, so that the irreducible overheads of fixed buildings, plant and management can be spread over the largest possible area. So long as any potential demand remains unsatisfied, Henry Ford and Restriction of

Output are contradictory expressions, and in the nature of things it is by a reduction in selling prices and not by an increase brought about by some form of artificial restriction that the widest possible source of demand can be tapped. In other words, maximum profit is attained by a small profit per unit multiplied by the largest possible number of units, and not by an increased selling price combined with an artificially restricted output. And it goes without saying that that system, whatever economic theories may suggest, has worked in practice to raise the community's standard of life by translating into necessities for the many what had hitherto been accepted as luxuries for the few.

The Retail Distributor, on the other hand, works the other way round. In normal times he fixes the selling price of the goods in any given department at such a level that at the end of the financial year the turnover in that department will, after allowing for pilferage and other known and unknown losses, show a given percentage rate of gross profit.

If the buyer or departmental manager were required to show a rate of gross profit on his sales of—say—25 per cent., he did not mark all his stock up at the same flat rate of profit. He was accustomed to merchandise, in the sense that on some goods he took more and on others less than the standard rate; and as commission on increased sales represented a large part of his remuneration, his inducement was to maximize his turnover at a percentage rate of profit no more than that laid down by the management. Incidentally, in carrying out his usual technique he unconsciously performed a social service in that he tended to take more profit on the higher priced merchandise which he sold to the well-to-do, while the cheaper goods intended for the poorer type of customer were also generally short profit lines. Similarly, taking the store as a whole, the rates of gross profit required from various departments were adjusted according to the type of merchandise, so that the gross profit earned on the total turnover of the business showed, after deducting total operating costs, a percentage net profit on turnover more or less in line with that earned in industry.

The whole point and purpose of this system is to keep on increasing sales so that, as a percentage, the fixed uncontrollable expenditure on buildings and fixtures can be spread over as large a field as possible; and the mark of the efficient retail business is its success in keeping its stock investment low in relation to its total turnover. In this way, by achieving the maximum rate of stock turn, physical stocks are always kept clean and fresh and up to date, while stock losses and mark downs are reduced to a minimum.

But these are the mere mechanics of the retailer's job, and he is

very far from being the automatic machine he is popularly supposed to be in the Working Party reports which now appear in ceaseless proliferation. It is probably true to say that between the wars no other factor contributed more to raising the standard of life of the community than the development of certain chain and departmental stores. They did and are doing a first-class job in interpreting consumer demand; and in using their bulk purchasing power to force down prices they bring all kinds of so-called luxuries within the reach of the common man's purse. The initiative and enterprise, the creation of a demand and the development of sources of supply to meet it, have in general come from them and not from the supplier; and by concentrating a wide variety of goods at one or two fixed selling prices or by offering exceptional value in a relatively small range and selection of goods, they have immensely increased the sum of real wages. And if in the aggregate they succeed in making very large profits, what difference does it make to the consumer who as a result of their skill, enterprise, courage and resource is able to buy a sound, well-made article for 3d. or 6d., which previously may have cost him two or three times as much? To say of such a constructive contribution to the national economy that it had a bias towards restricting output is just meaningless; and even the modern economist must find it difficult to think of—say—Woolworths in terms of a deliberate reduction in turnover. And yet as in the case of Henry Ford, it is the profit motive which in large scale retail distribution has stimulated the management to scour the world's markets for better and better value; and once more it is a case of an insignificant profit per unit multiplied by the maximum number of units which, at the end of the year, produces the maximum profit.

Moreover, in the vast field of retailing, with which so few economists seem to have concerned themselves, there is no question of monopoly or imperfect competition. The nearest approach to a closed shop is the Co-operative Movement. But even the most enthusiastic co-operator would not claim for his movement that it tried to compete on price. Its peculiar appeal rests on the fact that the dividend it periodically distributes has come to be recognised as the personal perquisite of the housewife. For the rest of the retail community the customer's freedom of choice remains the most potent factor; and in a free economy it is just this element of competition, combined with the competition which the retailer himself instigates between different suppliers to produce the right goods at the right price, which is, and always will remain, the principal protection of the consumer against high prices. Whatever may be true, therefore, of other fields of industry and com-

merce, theories of monopoly and imperfect competition have no place in any analysis of retailing.

Free Enterprise and Economic Planning

Three further things remain to be said about the profit motive. First, there is no better system for avoiding waste and testing efficiency. What possible comparison in efficiency and in the reduction of avoidable waste can any intelligent person expect between a keen, well-managed business, operating with its own capital, and the sprawling top-heavy over-centralized organization typified by the National Coal Board with unlimited public funds at its disposal. In maximizing net profit the rigid control of expenses is second in importance only to increasing turnover at the required rate of gross profit. What the driving force behind the National Coal Board may be is uncertain but as

- (1) it does not appear to be subject to Parliamentary control, and
- (2) has no shareholders to consider, and
- (3) any decisions it takes on wage and other costs, e.g., overtime working and five-day weeks, are overridden by political considerations, it is highly improbable that ruthless control of expenditure will be one of the Board's outstanding achievements or even numbered among its principal objectives.

In this connection it is significant that Mr. Morrison, while always prepared, in season and out of season, to lecture employers on scientific management, a subject on which he is no doubt qualified by training and experience to speak, reserves for the National Coal Board his exhortations on keeping down expenses.

Secondly, it is pointed out, quite rightly, that profit is a form of income. But primarily it is a wage for taking risks and it only becomes income if those risks have been successfully faced; with less skill, courage and judgment on the part of the risk-taker, that income may well have been turned into a loss. Further, it is quite wrong to associate that type of income solely or even mainly with rights of ownership. That confusion arises because the typical trading unit to-day is the Joint Stock Company, and the shareholder is pictured as the useless drone battenning on its toiling workers. What is overlooked is the often substantial shareholding in such companies, and especially in private companies, of the men directly concerned in managing their affairs. Such profit may ultimately return to them in the form of dividends on their own equity shareholdings, but those dividends reflect not so much their rights of ownership in their own private company but the management, skill and efficiency which have created the profits that make such dividends possible.

In the offers for sale of shares in such private businesses which

have been a feature of the Capital Issue market this year, it has been remarkable to observe how prudently so many of these family concerns have been financed, and what a large proportion of past profits have been ploughed back to finance subsequent development. It is, of course, not suggested that the total number of people who hold shares in various trading concerns, without taking any active part in the management of them, is not substantially larger than this other class now referred to; but when considering profit as a form of income, this class of managing proprietors who receive dividends as part of their remuneration from what is in effect their own business is large enough not to be ignored.

Thirdly, it is objected that the profit motive, and capitalism generally, lead to planlessness, and that what we want is social motivation combined with a planned economy. For example, the arch-planner, Sir Stafford Cripps, said in effect in his election address to his constituents: "We know from experience that if the Government plans and controls our resources we can produce vast quantities of all those things that are needed by the people."

Now it is obvious that in this context the term "planning" is used in a variety of different senses. At the one extreme Sir Stafford is apparently prepared, indeed anxious, to go to totalitarian lengths to direct, regiment and control and to deprive both Capital and Labour of such vestiges of freedom as they may have enjoyed even in war time. As against this, another school of thought, equally wedded to "planning," would throw overboard altogether the planned socialist economy if it involved compulsion on the individual or anything approaching industrial conscription. But whatever the official definition of "planning" may be, no country has ever been so planned against as our own during the last two years. In the light of our condition to-day, is not the ordinary detached observer entitled to ask whether in practice planning and controls have produced that cheap abundance, from houses to consumer goods, which he was led to expect? Or could planless private enterprise in fact have done any worse? If, instead of a reply, the rejoinder is made that of course world conditions have not given our national planning a chance, the answer surely must be that they seldom, if ever, will. How can economic planning on a national scale ever take account of another "no" from Mr. Molotov; or a war in Indonesia; or a drought in the cotton belt; or any one of a number of other global factors outside our national control?

To anyone who dares to suggest that no planning at all might be better than bad sloppy planning, the usual, rather petulant, riposte is, "Well surely you do not want, do you, to return to nine-

teenth century laissez-faire?". Of course no one wants to repeal all the Factory Acts. Of course everyone agrees that in our present plight food rationing and certain broad controls are indispensable. The real issue is not between planning and complete laissez-faire but between totalitarian controls and the right combination of planning and free enterprise. On this issue let us first apply our usual test and see what has actually happened in practice. Where, if anywhere, in the world to-day is cheap abundance to be found? In Russia with its 100% totalitarian economy? In this country with an economy which is rapidly becoming only slightly less totalitarian? In Belgium which has so far relaxed controls that food and clothes rationing have now been largely abolished? Or in America which has been thrown over altogether to the wolves of planless private enterprise? The question has only to be posed to be answered. And even if we discount the two extremes and confine our attention to our own country and Belgium, which both have to export or die and which both started broadly from scratch, in the same world conditions, after the end of the war, it must surely be a humiliation to every sober-minded Englishman to see how infinitely better Belgium has managed its affairs in finding the right combination of planning and free enterprise.

Secondly let us seek the opinion of one of the few men who can speak with authority on the subject of peacetime planning. Sir Oliver Franks is reported to have published in America a book called "Central Planning and Control in War and Peace" and broadly the thesis he sets out to establish is this:—Planning in peacetime can only be justified by some National Emergency and even then free enterprise must be left room to manoeuvre and exercise initiative. Civil Service encroachment on the field of free enterprise must be curbed, and clearcut Government leadership must take the place of narrow departmental control. Finally, bad planning is worse than no planning at all; and if it is to be effective, planning must anticipate the emergency it is intended to meet and not wait till the crisis has broken before its details begin to get thought out.

Few except the rabid totalitarian planner, who cannot tolerate the thought of any freedom of action for anyone, would quarrel with such an exposition of the principles of planning but it cannot have escaped notice that it has much more in common with Mr. Churchill's slogan of "Set the people free" than with the principles and practice of the present Government who, in the "Economist's" vivid phrase, have been rationing raindrops instead of trying to influence the economic weather. To reinforce this view, the following quotation may be taken from a paper read before the

Manchester Statistical Society by Mr. E. Devons who had first-hand experience of planning during the war as a high executive in the Ministry of Aircraft Production,—

“It is one of the ironies of planning that the more ambitious the system of co-ordination constructed the less likely is it to be successful.

“The more limited and successful it is the less useful will be its results. It follows that those who constructed theories of perfect planning during the war were usually bad planners in practice, while those who were sceptical of the possibilities of overall planning usually operated successfully limited schemes. Certainly the experience of M.A.P. seems to demonstrate that the best planners are the anti-planners.”

Lastly, as an example of the kind of planning we can very well do without, let the following experience from among the activities of the National Coal Board suffice. A textile firm in Lancashire with a world-wide reputation had been in the habit of buying its coal from a pit seven miles away from its weaving mill. From this pit it had been accustomed to get coal of the right quality at the right price, in the right quantities, and at the right time. Since the arrival of the Coal Board it now has to obtain its coal supplies from a pit 45 miles away. The quality of coal delivered would have been rejected out of hand had the local pit dared to supply it, and because that coal is largely incapable of raising steam, more is required and at a much higher price. Moreover, in order to make sure of coal being delivered at all, the firm has to go and fetch it in its own vehicles. Yet, this firm has all the raw material and the labour it requires, and is prevented from fulfilling its quota of exports only because it lacks the fuel which the pit seven miles away could quite conveniently provide.

In conclusion, it has been assumed throughout this essay that, all ethical or political considerations apart, the common goal of our economic effort is to raise the standard of living of the whole community by improving the level of real earnings. That can, in effect, be achieved only by creating cheap abundance and the issue really is by what system of incentives can such abundance best be provided. Moreover, the test of any theory or system is not how it ought to work but how in fact it has worked, not merely in this country but in other parts of the world. The profit motive has been with us since the beginning of time and to a greater or less degree is inherent in human nature. We know the worst about it and what it can and cannot do. If it is violently uprooted and replaced by social motivation or some other incentive, will our lot be any better in the sense that the standard of living of the

whole community will be raised? If the criterion of judgment is what has actually happened, then one can only contrast the cheap abundance in America under the profit motive with the experience of coal nationalization in this country and the equalization of misery which appears to be the practical result of Communism.

E. J. B. LLOYD

HOW CHRISTIAN IS ENGLAND?

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THE religious ideas which are popularly held may be studied either with curiosity about what people believe or in order to assess the influence and social value of organized religion. This paper will examine the contribution which such studies make to the latter purpose, with special reference to *Puzzled People*.¹ Nobody would suppose that popular opinions even in a mass democracy ever told the whole story. Just how much of it they do tell is the question for investigation.

In the 18th century when Christianity was under fire from the Deists and Bishop Butler marshalled in its defence the argument of his *Analogy* (1736), it is a balance of things doubtful dipping in favour of Revelation which he presents. But there are no popular doubts; the defenders of Christian orthodoxy appeal to popular passions, and all parties in the church repose complacently upon "the never-to-be-shaken constancy of the multitude."² Later, when Methodism and the Evangelical party gain their great influence, and prudential moralism is superseded by the drama of sin and salvation, it is again the multitude who respond, encouraged from above by those who fear the social ideas of the French Revolution. For Wesley's revival is not a return to the turbulence, the collisions, the ferment of ideas of the 17th century: its romanticism offered no adventures in this world, and thus it proved an instrument of social discipline of great importance in our history, as Elie Halévy has shown. In France, on the other hand, in the later stages of the Revolution, when the new Republic was dominated by the outside threat to its existence, the Christian religion was abolished overnight without a murmur of protest from anybody. The peasants were indifferent, the workers liked the fun of masquerade and mockery, the ex-nobles and middle classes were imbued with the

¹*Puzzled People*. Report prepared for the Ethical Union by *Mass Observation*. Gollancz, 1947.

²*Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750*. By Mark Pattison. In *Essays and Reviews*.

natural religion of Voltaire or of Rousseau.³ Probably France was more rapidly and completely de-christianised than Russia under the Soviet policy of militant atheism. If the multitude can give passionate support to the defence of Christian orthodoxy, accept the Christian theme of sin and salvation as the whole content of their lives, and accept the total abolition of the Christian religion with complete indifference, what is the explanation of these differences?

In the first place, there is a difference between established ecclesiastical institutions and persons, and Christianity as a simple faith and teaching taken hold of by the people for themselves and practised and propagated by evangelical sects. There is this difference popularly made between Christianity and the Church; and there is the older and more widespread difference popularly made between the Church and the clergy, of which William Langland's *The Vision of William Concerning Piers The Plowman* is the most eloquent and sustained example in early England. Mark Pattison, writing of the period of controversy with the Deists mentioned earlier, says: "Though the general feeling of the country was sufficiently decided to oblige all who wished to write against Christianity, to do so under a mask, this was not the case with attacks upon the Clergy. Since the days of the Lollards there had never been a time when the established ministers of religion were held in so much contempt as in the Hanoverian period, or when satire upon churchmen was so congenial to general feeling. This too was the more extraordinary, as there was no feeling against the Church Establishment, nor was non-conformity as a theory ever less in favour. The contempt was for the persons, manners, and character of the ecclesiastics." In our time when anti-clericalism tends to be freethinking and secularist, perhaps the analogy with earlier popular distinctions should be looked for in the minds of the Russian masses.

In the second place, Christianity and the Church cannot be eclipsed and replaced until events and independent movements provide the occasions and the alternatives. There was probably as much popular scepticism, wayward thinking, and gross superstition in the Middle Ages as at any time; but the omnipresence of the Church, its pageantry and festivals, and its administrative functions, rooted it in the day to day lives of the people: even their revolts and their independent thinking derived from Christian teaching and threatened the Church in its own name and for its own sake. The Wesleyan revival dramatized the life of the humblest and redeemed him from the bitterness of living, and put the people in possession of the Christian faith as the pearl of great price.

³*Christianity and the French Revolution.* By A. Aulard. *L'Eglise Catholique et la Révolution Française.* Vol. I. By André Latreille.

To-day the situation is very different: secular progress has taken administrative functions out of the hands of the Church; pageantry and festivals have been replaced by sporting events and the cinema; the working class has its own movement and the sound hope of social betterment by united action, and easy access to science and non-Christian schools of thought and bodies of doctrine. The reason why the Christian religion could be abolished without protest in France in the later phase of the Revolution was mainly that attachment to the principles of the Revolution was stimulated to religious fervour by the danger from enemies within and without: patriotism inspiring philosophy and philosophy inspiring patriotism became the ardent religion of Frenchmen; and the rural masses indifferent to the Church had no reason for resistance or resentment.

One may sum up by saying that Christianity holds the people directly in three ways: (1) when they depend directly upon its services and doctrines for their thought, their daily needs, their emotional and imaginative life; (2) when its appeal does stimulate, engage, and focus their energies upon some personal or social goal; (3) when Christian ministers are personally adequate and achieve results and win respect. In the circumstances of to-day Christianity is reduced to heavy dependence upon the third of these ways. A difference is still popularly made between Christianity and the Church, but seldom between the clergy and the Church; because there are still vague and respectful feelings about Christianity as an ethical ideal, but hardly a vestigial concept of the Church, its doctrine, and mission. Taking the effects of social progress upon the Church and taking the evidence of *Puzzled People*, there is some justification for concluding that so far as the mass of people are concerned, Christianity has been reduced to a matter of private philosophy in which they are little interested and not competent. A minister of religion who is energetic, realistic, and has popular gifts may still crowd his church and draw people from a distance; he may handle themes of contemporary and permanent human interest and exert an effective influence on his hearers; or another man with sense and initiative and kindness may win universal goodwill by his parish work. The point is that there is very little hostility or prejudice against Christianity and still less reasoned criticism of its doctrines; it is rather that organized religion impinges on ordinary personal life at so few points in the contemporary world and it requires intelligent and vigorous personal action to make it do so at all, and even then it is action on general grounds of human interest which is effective rather than on the specific ground of Christian doctrine. Mr. J. W. Robertson Scott in his recently republished *England's Green and Pleasant Land* makes the

influence of the Church in the rural parishes under his observation the principal theme of his study, and has to deplore the personal inadequacy of the clergy who in most instances conspicuously fail to provide anything like leadership in worth-while living.

This part of the subject, the popular hold of Christianity in England to-day, may be concluded by saying that popular interest in Christianity and the Church has been diluted many times by competing interests, opportunities, and institutions. It is a weak but still identifiable fluid, recognizable in general goodwill to Christianity and to ministers of religion who prove themselves in personal qualities and services. The old popular distinction between the Church and the clergy has given place to the current popular distinction between Christianity and all its institutional and dogmatic forms. That, or something like it, is the popular background to faith and order, life and work, in the Christian Church in this country to-day.

One may regard this popular condition as the failure of the churches and as dangerous to the people and to the State. This is the view taken by the writer of the report of *Mass Observation*. He is looking at the situation summarized above in its detail, broken down into individual cases, pitifully bewildered or ignorant answers to the questions put. However, a survey of the condition of popular religious opinion is not sufficient evidence of the religious condition of society. There are other factors to be taken into account: educated opinion; the number and influence of believers and active adherents; the opinion of national leaders. Popular religious opinion is only one variable in the formula. There have been no studies in this country to evaluate these other variables; but there are certain assumptions and indications which it is worth while to bring under review for the sake of giving provisional meaning to the survey of popular opinion.

(1) The difference between educated and popular opinion is a difference of context, a difference of more or less, with no hard and fast line of division. Educated religious opinion is not a more or less casual personal opinion on religious questions: beyond the personal judgment of acceptance or rejection of particular doctrines and claims is the view of their historical development and meaning and the recognition of religion as an objective problem and a permanent social need. It involves a more or less firm and informed thought-out line of one's own, and not merely respect for the religious convictions of others but also frank and lively interest in their views and the reasons for which they hold them. Such a person, whether he holds any form of the Christian faith or not, recognizes the variety of Christian belief and something of what has

gone to the making of that variety. Believers and non-believers take an intelligent and tolerant interest in each other's views, and in so far as this easiness is characteristic of educated people and prevails generally, there is in process a continuous mutual modification not so much of opinions as of claims; there is created a mental and moral climate favourable to variety and resistant to exclusiveness, to fanaticism and infallibility, to ambitious aims and bids for supremacy. When this is the prevailing temper of educated people who hold all the key positions in a society, that society is as safe as it can be from domination by a party; it is as immune as it can be made from the disease of orthodoxy. When persons and parties of opposed views and principles are not raising the issue of who shall suppress whom, and are therefore not in fear of each other, they discover virtues and uses in each other, as well as stimulus and challenge, and become mutually constructive. In such a situation, for example, the Christian Church becomes hospitable to much that is not specifically Christian, and by its social acceptance, which is not acceptance of its doctrines, assimilates vitality and modernity that does more for its survival and influence than a mere reform of doctrine, statement, and usage. Thus one should not jump to conclusions when Bishop Barry says that humanism is the religion of half the intelligent persons in the modern world, or Dr. Sperry of America that the men who are doing much if not most of the serious work of the modern world in the professions and at the universities are one generation removed from the church and the Christian faith,¹ or Sir Henry Slessor in the current *Fortnightly* that educated people in this country hold the views of Bertrand Russell and a modernized stoicism has supplanted religion with them. The pessimism of the Christian observer is not new: one may recall that Butler in the *Advertisement* to his *Analogy* says, not without irony one may suppose, that it is come to be taken for granted as if it were an agreed point among all people of discernment that Christianity is not so much a subject of inquiry but that it is at length discovered to be fictitious. That was more than two hundred years ago, and since then scholarship and science have discovered all the evidence that can ever be used against the Christian case. All the same, there are still many educated persons and subtle thinkers who find themselves able and bound to accept the Christian faith. Indeed, some of those who have been emancipated by scientific education have second thoughts, and with these the churches may have nothing to gain by trying to be liberal and up-to-date. Dr. Sperry remarks that many of those who have been trained in the biological

¹*Religion in America*. By Willard L. Sperry. Cambr'dge University Press.

and social sciences have no use for the liberal churches on account of their optimism about human nature. On both sides, the wise and the knowledgeable have no reason to be cocksure and superior, have every reason to be tolerant and respectful, with a lively interest in each other's minds. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that educated opinion has not turned definitely against Christianity and is not much likely to in the foreseeable future; and further, that in so far as it has, the humanists even if they were organized (as they are not) would still have a respect and use for the church such as one political party in this country has for another: that in effect the church in this country (comprehensively considered in Coleridge's sense as the whole nation on its ideal side) is not identified with the State, still less with one party, and is not likely to be, but is a twin sphere of like structure. This is a conclusion which most of us on reflection would accept and most of us more often than not forget.

(2) The figure for church attachment and attendance in this country at this time is generally taken to be about ten per cent. of the population. The corresponding figure for America is more than fifty per cent. and for Holland, for example, more than eighty per cent. Assuming that such figures are reliable and strictly comparable, we cannot certainly say what they mean. It may mean that there is a cultural lag, and that the higher figures have a downward trend; and there is evidence for this view. On the other hand, there is enough difference in the situations to account for the difference in figures and leave very little evidence for the thesis that the decline and fall of the Christian churches has set in, beginning with Britain. The social habit of church-going in Britain has lapsed, and that is all that can be positively said. Members of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union are a small minority of the people. The ten per cent. attached to the churches in Britain include ardent Christians of the highest quality, rare anywhere, who although they are scattered and isolated, and by no means highly organized and disciplined and in power, may leaven the whole lump and have no small influence on the conscience and leadership of the nation. It is they who with a people unconsciously responsive to Christian principles can make a Christian society.¹

(3) One is bound to consider separately educated and popular opinion, and also to evaluate separately the influence of the small number of deeply Christian persons; but why count separately the opinion of national leaders? The simple answer is that in this matter each does not count for one and no one for more than one. National leaders in the great interests in a democratic country could

¹*The Idea of a Christian Society.* By T. S. Eliot. Faber and Faber.

not flout Christian sentiment if it were actively strong and represented, but if it were weak and unorganized it would not count for much with them unless they were imbued with it themselves. It would appear that in Britain to-day many of the leaders in politics, in the trade unions, in the civil service, in the professions, and in education are either professed Christians or else Christian in sentiment. The mixture of Christians and non-Christians in the leadership of the nation reproduces at that level the situation characteristic of educated opinion, and ensures respect both for Christian principles and for different views. At the same time, those national leaders who are professed and practising Christians help to bring about an interpenetration of the churches and the great organized interests, interpreting the one to the other, making each more real to the other. For the Christian cause, each is a host in himself, not because he makes converts but because he is a representative public man. Further, sometimes through leading men and sometimes not, there is the use which other interests make of Christian agencies, and the use which Christian interests make of other agencies; and there may be alliances of other interests with the churches or with the Christian cause, marriages of convenience or of love.

The evaluation of the formula for Christian influence in a society is therefore likely to be much higher than the figure merely representing popular opinion. The figure for popular opinion does not measure the failure of the churches. Of course no accurate computation could be made, and the factors which have to be represented in the product are likely to be more subtle, more powerful, more unpredictable than could be indicated by any weight one would be justified in giving them on abstract considerations such as those which have been reviewed in this paper. The factors themselves have no absolute meaning: it is in their intricate interaction that what they may mean has to be studied. Thus the vague Christian sentiment of the masses may become too diffuse to conduct the current of active Christian appeal on a public issue or a specific occasion. Or Christian leaders and their friends may become suspected of ambitions which non-Christians will not tolerate, and at once goodwill dries up and the situation is transformed. Or the provocation may come from a non-Christian totalitarian party. Moreover, we see nearly every day, democratic sentiment, common kindness, the sense of fair play, and the like, coming to the call of Christian principles or Christian action. The specifically Christian is as difficult to isolate in social influence as a virus or a vitamin; indeed it is much more difficult to isolate. One may say with equal exaggeration and equal truth that the pure life of grace of fundamental Christianity is the only operative Christian principle, and

that Christianity is only operative at all when it is so heavily diluted with the life of the natural world that it is hard to detect its trace in any sample. Old Hobbes had the point when he wrote: "It is with the mysteries of our Religion as with wholesome pills for the sick, which swallowed whole, have the virtue to cure; but chewed are for the most part cast up again without effect."

The main argument of this paper has been that popular religious ideas, always interesting and important, are never in themselves a measure of the influence of religion in a society; they have meant quite different things at different times and never mean anything outside of their relations to other factors in a total situation. It is only by studying fully the total situation in its living complexity that the sociologist or the religious statesman can hope to understand what is going on, and, following his interests and purposes, judge where danger is most real or action most promising. Religion in a modern society is a field of study more difficult than politics and one for which there are fewer techniques and instruments for making assessments. The tortoise of sober judgment is making a slow start, but may still sometime overtake the confident conclusions which meanwhile jump into sight and attract the public interest.

H. J. BLACKHAM

REVIEW ARTICLE

Music and Reason

DR. JOHNSON said he was afraid that if he had learned music he would have done nothing else but *play*; it was a method of employing the mind without the labour of thinking. It is a pity that *Music and Reason*¹ was not there for his enlightenment. He would have learned from it that rational processes enter into musical composition, and that the logic of notes is fully as compelling as the logic of words. Even if the book does not quite satisfy in all its aspects it still remains a valuable statement, with its downright denial of anything that cannot be brought within the grip of reason. It gives us a strong position to counter, bringing out all our powers of assault.

But what *is* reason? Is reason limited to the analytical, constructive faculty of the human mind, *our* reason; or does it embrace the reason which lies behind "the starry firmament and the moral law" and all manner of growth and change? It makes a vast difference whether we approve the one or other explanation; whether we view ourselves as the only creative agent (taking the wider creative system just as we find it—for granted, so to speak—

¹*Music and Reason*. By Charles T. Smith. (Watts & Co., 2s. 6d.).

with only a "thank you"); or feel that we are just a tiny element of the creative process, scarcely more than a shadow of it, which proceeds in wonderful, majestic stride all around us, and of which we, with our limited creative powers (for we do scarcely more than rearrange already created matter) are merely a part.

"Man's soul is at one with the Reason of things." Yes, but man's soul is not *the* Reason. We can be at one with reason when we discover truth or beauty, but truth and beauty are not of our making. We are in no sense conterminous with such reason as this; we do not control it; rather does it control us in spite of our lordly assumptions. There seems to be a pre-arranged plan to which we conform; some power which works through us, but which, by no means, we initiate. Recently we had it from Mr. Ernest Newman that "the spirit of music knows what it wants, will not be turned aside from its millennial purpose, and will take each decisive step only at its own good time"; which, whether it is the whole truth or not, seems far nearer to it than the assertion that it is we who, by the exercise of our reason, determine the progress of events.

Allowance therefore has to be made for an external, dominating principle, quite other than ourselves, which may well act upon us in the process which we call "inspiration." The very term indicates the idea of an intake not an output of the spirit; it is hallowed by centuries of use in this sense. I am aware that we are in tremendously deep water here; but I feel that Mr. Smith's undoubted skill does not, cannot, rescue us from it, since he is averse to leaving terra firma, or acknowledging any influence which he cannot understand. Inspiration from the outside is anathema to him; he bans it, with bell, book, and candle, as furiously as any medieval inquisition would have done in the case of a reverse assertion.

A theory of "inspiration" may assert that ideas, under certain conditions of excitement, fly off from us like sparks from molten metal; it will also have to allow that ideas may arise when our minds are practically at rest. On the other hand it may assert that ideas come because we are taken possession of by a sort of daemonic power. St. John of the Cross in the prologue to the *Cantico* maintained this latter, though he also admitted a conscious artistic control in the composition of his poetry, whereby ideas can be rejected or modified according to the critical faculty—thus avoiding the danger of irresponsibility. "It would be ignorance," he writes, "to think that the sayings of love in mystical intelligence can be properly explained in any words whatsoever, because the spirit of the Lord in us . . . begs on our behalf for what we ourselves cannot well comprehend or understand, so as to manifest it." In essence

it is certainly possible to side with St. John. Reason cannot account for the sudden flashes of genius, though genius is a reasonable thing. It may account for the laborious process of "fabrication" according to remembered precept, but not for that final touch of beauty which seems to be a spontaneous discovery of something divine already in being. For Mr. Smith, inspiration is an expressive matter—there is surely some contradiction here—a projection of mental force, an affair of the composer, entirely dominated by his individual mind. But one is bound to add that he makes out an excellent case on these lines, and that he will find many to support him. Roughly stated, he says: the composer having chosen his seminal ideas, is enabled "to concentrate on the organic development of the music by means of his technique, inventiveness, and temperament." Then, "as the intensity of his concentration further increases, the whole strength of his mentality focusses so sharply on his immediate task that his power of musical thought, drawing energy from every other channel, becomes incandescent and induces a state of *catharsis*, in which the rarefied mind, purged of all sensorial distractions, sees with visionary clearness the crucial problems that have to be solved and the way to solve them." The question is then put: "where, in this, is there any evidence of the divine or supernatural?" And the answer *seems* assured. But is it; is the composer cut off from external promptings? How do we know? How can we say that life itself, which is ultimately responsible for the composer's activities, is not sustained and fed from the outside; that vital force is not only a matter of what we put into the stomach or impress upon the senses, but is related to a source infinitely distant and beyond our understanding? It appears to be as credible a belief as the reverse, and I think it is far more wholesome, more calculated to put us in our place. It is certainly more in accord with the feelings of those who are most concerned, the great composers—indeed, most of the great ones of the earth. "Not I, but my Father which is in me," is the continuous assertion. Byrd, Bach ("To God alone be glory"), Haydn, Beethoven ("I am that which is. I am all that is, that was, and that shall be; no mortal has ever lifted my veil"—an inscription upon his writing-desk) all recognised some power outside themselves with which they were at one. Nor is this to be put down to traditional modes of thought. Such modes would never have become traditional unless there was a deep, instinctive sense that at their root lay a profound truth. It matters not that Berlioz said that he believed neither in God nor in immortality, that Brahms was an apostate from Christianity, or that Delius was a rationalist. Each searched a sphere beyond that of the intelligence, and whether they recognised it or not, that is the point at issue.

"Man must have some relation towards the uncharted, the mysterious tracts of life which surround him on every side. And for my part," says Dr. Gilbert Murray, "I am content to say that his method must be to a large extent very much what St. Paul calls . . . faith: that is, some attitude not of the conscious intellect but of the whole being, using all its powers of sensitiveness, all its feeblest and most inarticulate feelers and tentacles, in the effort somehow to touch by these that which cannot be grasped by the definite senses or analysed by the conscious reason. What we gain thus is an insecure but a precious possession. We gain no dogma, at least no safe dogma, but we gain much more. We gain something hard to define, which lies at the heart not only of religion, but of art and poetry and all the higher strivings of human emotion. I believe that at times we actually gain practical guidance in some questions where experience and argument fail." This is the necessary note of humility; and, I think, of healthy common sense. We may quarrel with terms and dogmas; we can scarcely quarrel with the make up of the universe; we have to accept it. Mr. Smith implies that we can account for the romance and beauty of life by the exercise of reason. A better statement might be that reason recognizes romance and beauty, feeds upon them (and so far understands them); but it does not account for them. That is beyond its powers.

Perhaps all this is no more than a way of approach, and the experience is the same whatever we call it. But the "way" leads to different appraisements. For instance, if there is nothing (except a sort of self-deception) in what we are accustomed to term the religious attitude, it follows that we can airily dispose of religious practice (found in all the great religions) as stuff and nonsense, since it has no *raison d'être*. This is obviously the author's view and it is backed up by what I take to be his assertion, that the Christian Church was the enemy of music, preventing it from flowering in a natural way, and that it is to secular effort that the development of the art was really due. But *did* the Church oppose technical innovation, or refuse to let its musicians deploy their full strength as artists? The glory of plainsong and of medieval polyphony rises up to deny it. If St. Augustine could say of the primitive unisonous melos of his time, "What tears I shed at thy hymns and canticles; how acutely was my soul stirred by the voices and sweet music of thy church! As those voices entered my ears, truth distilled in my heart, and thence divine affection welled up in a flood, in tears o'erflowing, and happy was I in those tears"; and Wagner—no Christian in the ordinary sense—could write of complicated Palestrinian song that "through it, we obtain as it were a timeless and spaceless picture, an entirely spiritual revelation by which we are affected with indes-

cribable emotion, since it represents to us more clearly than anything else the inmost essence of religion, free from all dogmatic ideas"—it is obvious that Christian church music, as such, was not deficient in emotional and spiritual appeal.

We can, however, side with Mr. Smith when he refuses to allow the term "inspiration" to be appropriated by any religious creed, or given to any particular class of composers. Dance measures may be as "inspired" as the most contemplative strains of sacred song. But, as ideas are always *about* something, it makes all the difference what they *are* about. The whole question is one of fitness (or "function," as Mr. Smith would say). "Airs and madrigals" may "whisper softness in chambers," but a different kind of music is needed for the sanctuary—this Mr. Smith would agree to—but when, strangely, he chides the Church authorities for being concerned with the kind of music that they required, eliminating some music (which perhaps Mr. Smith would think fitting), but having a very clear idea of what *they* thought fit: Mr. Smith, I think, holds it up against them. It is true that, on the whole, they ostracised "secular" music at the period of their best judgment—a period to which Mr. Smith so objects. They jealously guarded church art from secular contamination, though it was also guarded by the very style and condition of the art itself at that time. But if it was a sin, as the author implies, for them to have fettered music in this altogether ridiculous way, then it was a strangely productive sin, resulting in a corpus of choral art that is a chief monument of civilization. They did not object to secular art, they only tried to keep it in its proper place, outside the church. Alas, there it often secured entry, notwithstanding. As well deplore the fact that a cathedral is not a cinema, as desire that the highest form of church music shall be other than it is. What one can legitimately claim for church music, and, in particular, medieval church music, is that it sets the art in a certain direction; it moves along certain paths which could not otherwise be followed. Without the lead of the Church, taken in its widest sense, a whole tract of human emotion would have remained unexplored. But under its tutelage invention was not stayed, nor secular expression stamped out; the heartiest spirit had play as well as the most ascetic practice. All along the line there were parallel streams of sacred and secular music. The Troubadours had their sphere at courts and courtly houses; folk-song flourished (it has been killed by our more "rational" civilization); instrumental art took shape; ballades and love-songs, such as those of Guillaume de Marchault in the 14th century, abounded, and were technically as advanced as the more serious ecclesiastical songs of the time. Earlier still, it was a monk who, in the 13th century, wrote the famous secular round "Sumer is

icumen in." But till the Renaissance the "sacred" and "secular" were in the main clearly differentiated; with great advantage to artistic purity. Since then we have hardly known where we are; confusion reigns because the religious attitude is so loosely defined. Mr. Smith is right in saying that there is a thin line of demarcation between the secular madrigal and the sacred motet of the middle ages—though it is broader than we usually believe it to be. But this was because in very complex music, the sacred style, at that period, was the only style in which composers could work. In the simpler forms of music, secularity, as shown in metrical measures of the dance, was quite pronounced, though it did not come under the aegis of the Church.

It is ungracious, then, following rationalistic *parti pris*, to suggest that the Church had little or nothing to do with the composition of its own music; that such music arose from secular and rational impulses, and would have happened anyway. This wresting of an artistic manifestation from its natural setting seems poor history. We have no right to assume that church art would have been produced apart from Christian theology, any more than that Greek art would have arisen without its association with the Olympian deities. These things stand and fall together; art, *per se*, does not determine the situation. Religion is an art, as the author says; at any rate it has artistic elements in it. If a religious system lacked logic and reason it would have no chance of acceptance or survival. But to suppose that religion is merely a product of human ingenuity, a sort of thing that can be invented at will, without reference to the facts of experience, is surely an absurdity. Essentially religion is an acknowledgment of transcendental values beyond the ken of reason; the function of reason is to establish an intellectual connexion with those values, according to current science—and this is best achieved in terms of art. It may be ventured that when this specifically religious attitude fails, art must fail also; from being deprived of its natural sustenance. To support the statement of Professor C. J. Patten that "Divine service" (in the Chapel Royal, Dublin Castle) "was, to our boyish minds, a well-staged performance in which we choir boys, well-groomed and robed in cassock and surplice, were performers in the 'cast,' equally as important as the venerable Dean himself and his reverend satellites" smacks of very juvenile intelligence. Ask a poor soul who kneels in grief before a Catholic altar whether she is "playing at prayer." Her answer should silence the wise professor.

I trust I have not misunderstood Mr. Smith's message, nor travestied his real argument. In spite of the foregoing criticisms, I recommend *Music and Reason* most warmly. Granted the premises, it is a fine piece of work, admirably sustained and developed. It has a cleansing mission, bringing fresh air to musical discussion; and,

by its expert touch, removing much sentimental nonsense that has gathered round the subject, particularly when dealt with by those who, with quite superficial training, have no claim to speak for it.

The author shows us how musicians are equipped for their "spiritual" labours (quotation marks are his); how we listen to music; what he understands by the terms "sacred" and "secular" (or rather by "secular" alone, for he has no use for the former term); he gives us some extremely valuable historical information covering a wide range; he discusses the nature of "greatness" in music, and assesses "popular" judgment in a very sound way. He deals with music and life, leading us to serious reflection upon the vital principles at work: in short, no better book than this can be found to stimulate thought concerning the art of music, or to introduce the reader to the problems involved.

"Who hath made man's mouth?
Or who maketh him dumb?
Have not I, the Lord?"

Words like these, or their equivalent, are probably beyond Mr. Smith's sympathies; his book would not be what it is were it otherwise. But it is perhaps from this that he just fails completely to convince us. Does he not make the artist too sure of himself and of the omnipotence of his reason? In removing fallacies, have not some truths been removed as well?

CHARLES KENNEDY SCOTT

BOOK REVIEWS

THE RATIONAL GOOD. By L. T. Hobhouse. (pp. viii and 160. Watts & Co., Thinker's Library, 2s. 6d.).

It is good that this important work of Hobhouse on a rational system of ethics should be made available in a cheap edition. How does it read after the happenings of the past few years, the second world war and the rise of the totalitarian powers? In a foreword, Archibald Robertson suggests that the present generation may find in it a too facile optimism; but it must be borne in mind that abstract discussions of forces and conflicts inevitably lack the sharp pangs and deep feelings engendered by the lived-through experience. The centre of Hobhouse's theories is harmony, man's attainment of ever higher and more complex forms of harmony. A criticism can be levelled that he placed too much emphasis on the end and too little on the means. The process of civilization is in the main the struggle for a new synthesis rather than its attainment. Attainment is merely the stepping-off point for further adventure, except for the timid or the aged who either do not like it or have gone past the time when new interests and energies are available. Therefore, man

seeks disequilibrium as frequently as he does harmony. The mountain climber is a good example of this; he is always attempting to keep in a situation of relative disequilibrium; whenever a particular type of climb loses for him a degree of instability he looks elsewhere for something more difficult that will bring it back. The relative character of the experience demanded must be noted well, however, for the mountaineer can quite easily get into a position where danger instead of being a challenge can terrify. The need for a mean between too great disequilibrium and harmony is well seen in the political sphere. The extreme revolutionary as well as the over-conservative is a frightened man, and too advanced political programmes inevitably require reactionary counter-weights.

Another criticism that may be levelled at Hobbouse is that he does not make sufficient allowance for the selective processes of evolution. The development of forms of life and institutions is not merely the harmonizing of all the factors present, but the rejection of those that are not needed. The world, one is so often told, is full of the fossils of extinct species of animal, marine, and vegetable life, and the process is going on and applies to man too and his social and political institutions. Some specimens become obsolete, some are of no value at any time, and it is often difficult to judge between the two and this is of more than academic interest because with the uneven development of civilization it is difficult to determine whether institutions which are of no value in advanced cultures are of value to the less advanced.

Hobbouse's refusal to accept the necessity of permanence and immortality as a prerequisite of the good is the crux of the rationalist's case. Good is something intrinsic in itself without reference to an outside standard. The author accepts, though with evident reluctance, the possibility of the decay of our solar system and what this implies. It is here that to place greater emphasis on life as a process and not as a series of ends is comforting. As a process, evolution downwards might be as enjoyable as the upward ascent and there would be gains as well as losses; in any event, man's consciousness would keep pace with the material conditions. There is no evidence that a higher civilization produces more happiness; it is merely interesting to produce higher standards: and so a decline need not have an adverse effect on happiness. M. L. BURNET

BACKGROUND TO MODERN THOUGHT. By C. D. Hardie. (pp. 174. C. A. Watts & Co., Thinker's Library, 2s. 6d.).

This is an extraordinarily exasperating addition to a great and respected series. Professor Hardie is known for his clear and useful

little book *Truth and Fallacy in Educational Theory*, in which he applied his Cambridge logic to good purpose in clearing the ground for any possible educational theory. But in this book he fails to do anything like as good a service. The performance was bound to fail because he tries to sit on four too widely separated stools. The pity of it is that if he had been content to sit on each in turn and address himself from each to an appropriate audience, he would have been well worth listening to. The book is exasperating for that reason. The error of judgment is tiresome, but the knowledgeable reader could swallow it and get some profit out of the book. However, there is a more serious fault. Mr. Hardie apparently writes for the more or less uninformed intelligent general reader who wants a background to modern thought: for the kind of young man whom the present reviewer, with the book in his hands reading the last pages whilst he waited in a queue, found immediately in front of him reading the first pages. For this purpose it is worse than unsuitable. Professor Hardie gives a stimulating account of the development of Western thought, written from the special point of view of exclusive interest in science. This is for the young man; and is more or less popularly presented. As an adequate background to modern thought it is disingenuous, for it is written to the author's thesis that salvation is by science. Mr. Hardie ought to have limited himself to a general sketch of the history of science (itself a form of humanism) which he very justifiably thinks is a most important and most neglected study. In the concluding chapters on The Present Age, he takes Carnap's (by no means established) view of ethics as though it were the only rational view, unaccountably deriding all alternatives as though they were no better than crude drilling in Christian ethical precepts. He then launches an attack upon the existing educational system because it is not founded upon science. There are two Appendices devoted to problems in logic which can only mean something to those already acquainted with the literature. Frankly, it is a shocking piece of work from the hands of a professor of education and an apostle of science and logical thought. Professor Hardie could have written a popular general sketch of the history of science or of scientific ideas; he could have argued his case for the kind of ethical theory he is persuaded is true; he could have made a reasoned criticism of our educational system; he could have presented his views on the problem of induction: but for such a man with such a mission to mix a half-attempt at each of these things in a few pages designed to help the ordinary man to understand the modern world is a sad example of the loss of ordinary bearings which may be caused by the close devotion to the disciplines of reason.

H.J.B.

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY IN ANCIENT CHINA. By Joseph Needham. (pp. 20. Watts & Co., 2s.).

In this Conway Memorial Lecture, Dr. Needham contrasts the two classical schools of philosophy in China, the Confucians and the Taoists, the former of which he associates with Chinese medieval society and the latter he explains as critics of the system with thoughts harking back to the primitive society that preceded it. The picture is of the Taoist with thoughts based upon intuitive and observational knowledge as against the rationalism and ordered relationships of the Confucian. It would take scholarship to pronounce a verdict on the picture drawn and assessment made of the two schools by the author, but of the fact that early class society had its critics there can be no doubt. Man in primitive society is alive and free with an active mind and a keen interest in all about him and compares very favourably with those who have accepted a primitive theology, stiff in the joints, that precludes the checks of common-sense and experience. Needham draws the conclusion that rationalism is far from being a progressive force at all times.

Of course, if we think of rationalism simply as any system of thought which uses the reasoning faculties we shall have to include all the dogmatic theologies and political philosophies which are *par excellence* systems of thought based on reasoning. In the Rationalist movement we mean reasoning based upon empirical methods in which every effort is made to check knowledge by reference to nature and through experimentation. There is, too, a refusal to accept premises unquestioned, which accounts for the great errors that followers of dogmatic theories are led into. Of course, false premises are usually chosen deliberately because they fit some class interest or personal predilection. The use of the rational hypothesis pushed to the greatest possible extent is essential to detecting new relationships and is only a danger in those cases where there is either no checking up with observed phenomena, or no possibility of doing so. A probable defect of primitive man was a failure owing to commonsense to construct far-fetched mental structures, though there is no evidence of a general lack of inventiveness in primitive man.

M. L. BURNET

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF OPINION AND ATTITUDE RESEARCH. A Quarterly, edited by Laszlo Radvanyi. Vol. 1, No. 1. (English Agent, Social Research Publications, Ltd., 6s. 6d.; £1 p.a.).

The work which is being done in the field of detailed reporting and study of human behaviour, opinion, and attitude is now so great in extent and engages so many bodies and agencies that a sub-

stantial common journal has become indispensable for information on current and forthcoming projects, the review of publications, and the discussion of methods and organization and interpretation of results. The present quarterly promises to fulfil the purpose and is warmly to be welcomed. In this country the pioneer work of Mass Observation has been snubbed by academic sociologists and it is only fair that Major Tom Harrisson, in a refreshingly British article, should justifiably show up the backward state of British sociology compared with the American studies. "To achieve for British sociology its full purpose," he concludes, "there will have to be a higher degree of co-operation within sociology, as well as between sociology and its sister disciplines. There has been far too much suspicion, not enough pooling of knowledge, ideas, methods and results. That is not science, let alone sociology. All methods of social research should now be developed, improved and employed as required. No one method is sufficient in itself. The field is small, the subject vast. There is room for everyone to try everything, without upsetting anyone's interests. All methods are only parts in one process: *the objective description of human society and behaviour.*" This is well said, and it is well that it should be Major Harrisson who says it, and that it should be said in this publication which embodies the spirit of his words. An article *Social Determinants of Public Opinion* by Professor Alfred McClung Lee is of outstanding interest as a theoretic analysis of the structure of opinion. And there is a useful historical survey *Some Milestones in Public Opinion Research*, by Henry C. Link. A very satisfactory and welcome new publication.

H.J.B.

INTERNATIONAL FREE TRADE UNION NEWS. Monthly publication of the American Federation of Labour.

This publication is of interest in that it marks the commencement of a workers' militant anti-Soviet movement. Apart from the early days of the Russian Revolution, the social democratic parties have hitherto been content to make reasoned criticism of Russian policies only on such points as the lack of democracy and the harshness of the application of the land nationalisation, but the general attitude has been one of sympathetic tolerance. From 1935 until the outbreak of war, the Russian policy was conciliatory to the social democratic parties under the United Front policy of the Russian state, and the policy of dubbing social democrats as fascists was discontinued. After Russia became involved in the war a return was made to the United Front policy and this has been in force until recently, with the promotion of the new body, the Cominform, a further attack upon the socialist parties seems to be indicated.

After Russia became involved in the war a new international body for trade unionists was formed, the World Federation of Trade Unions, to which most national bodies, social democrat and communist alike, affiliated. The American Federation of Labour, the older of the two large federations of American unions, however did not affiliate on the ground that the Russian unions were not democratically organised. While during the war the Federation carried out no active campaign, for some time past a deliberate attempt has been made to create a movement, international in extent, to challenge the marxist position.

What are its prospects of success? Probably greater than at first sight would appear possible. Before the war the fascist type totalitarian states were so much more of a menace to democratic states and labour institutions that little attention was paid to the Soviet Union. Also, up to the time of the 1936 purges Soviet policy was in a sense a workers' policy though by no means every worker's ideal policy. The weeding out of the socialist elements in the Communist Party in 1936 did not attract the attention that it might have had if the attention of democrats of all shades of opinion had not been pre-occupied with Hitler.

With the removal of the main fascist régimes from the stage the issues are being clarified and hostility is likely to grow. The solidification of the world into two blocs will also have its effect on the issue. A main charge made in the A.F.L. journal is that the Soviet's interest in trade unionism is merely motivated from imperialist interests, and no doubt counter charges of a similar character will be made by Soviet propagandists. It is important that social democrats do not allow any contest that may lie ahead to degenerate into a mere power fight between the two rival blocs of nations in which the particular and specific international interests of labour organizations might sink out of sight. The danger is least with the mature member of a labour organization in whom the traditional attitudes of the movement are well entrenched, but very real with the newcomer who may mistake the true purpose for a chauvinist attitude in which narrow interests prevail.

M. L. BURNET

THE RATIONALIST ANNUAL, 1948. Edited by Frederick Watts.
(Watts & Co., 2s. 6d.).

It is a great pleasure to recommend this year's *Rationalist Annual*. Each one of the eleven articles is well worth reading, and all the writers handle their topics with a serious, straightforward competence and a remarkable uniformity of rational temper; so

that the miscellany as a whole is an impressive expression of modern Rationalism. Two of the articles are historical, and the others, with the exception of *Freedom as a Social Quality* (which demands careful study) by Leonard Barnes, are essentially critical; but that is no matter for complaint, since the critical analysis is all of a kind that assists understanding and promotes effective thinking. Several of the writers, notably Mr. Crawshay-Williams and Mr. George Woodcock, write on topics which they made familiar during the year in publications which won a good deal of public attention. Indeed, the greater part of the annual is in effect representative of work already published; and this is useful and appropriate. The Editor is to be congratulated on having put together a number which on many counts deserves unstinted praise. H.J.B.

NOW, VOYAGER. ODE FOR BARITONE AND STRING QUARTET. Words by Walt Whitman; music by Ernst H. Meyer. (J. B. Cramer & Co., Ltd., 3s.).

This composition, now published, was written for the meeting in memory of Charles A. Watts at Conway Hall on October 10, 1946. Such compositions are by no means sure to be successful, but it can be said with confidence that this work proved itself on that occasion. There is all too little to choose from, which has the dignity, expressiveness, and humanist content wanted for such a purpose. This work is not merely suitable; it is memorable. It will help to make a standard for these occasions.

CORRESPONDENCE

Marx and the Marxists

In the October *Plain View*, Mr. Katz puts forward a new hypothesis about Marx and Engels. Marx, he suggests, started as a sociologist in rebellion against all metaphysics, and managed to keep pretty clear of them down to 1848. So far, so good. Then, after the failure of the 1848 revolution, his "activist temper weakened," and he succumbed to the metaphysical Engels, who had never broken with Hegel at all. We should accept Marx in his state of grace, when he was a pure sociologist, but reject him in his fallen condition, when he became a metaphysical dogmatist!

This is more original than the view of Wells, who saw in Marx a neurotic recluse trying to reconstruct the world from the British Museum, and in Engels an underrated, nobly self-effacing thinker whose brains Marx picked and on whom he outrageously sponged. All the same, I think Mr. Katz does as much injustice to Engels as

Wells did to Marx. Engels makes his attitude to metaphysics quite clear. He rejects any attempt by Hegel or anyone else to lay down laws for the universe *a priori*. The brain reflects the real world, not *vice versâ*. The test of a hypothesis is trial and error. "Before there was argumentation, there was action . . . The proof of the pudding is in the eating." It is obvious that this position, which anticipates the pragmatism and critical realism of later days, makes short work of any philosophy which seeks to unravel the cosmic process otherwise than by patient study of natural and historical fact. I refer Mr. Katz in particular to the chapter on *Idealism and Materialism* in Engels' *Feuerbach*, and to the introduction to *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.

As to the theory that Marx's "activist temper" weakened under the influence of the 1848 failure, the facts are against it. I should have thought the salient thing about Marx was his refusal to accept defeat. Others might retire to their armchair or their ivory tower, but not he. And so from the defeat of 1848 he went on to his work in economics, and then on to the formation of the International, and then on to the defence of the Commune, and then on to more theoretical work, last of all supervising the translation of the *Communist Manifesto* into Russian, and so passing on the tools to those who could use them!

Neither Marx nor Engels were metaphysicians, in the usual sense of essaying a purely theoretical approach to the riddle of the universe. Both followed the empirical method of basing theories on generalization from admitted facts and submitting them to the test of practice. Metaphysics, therefore, cannot be held responsible for any mistakes which may be discovered in the reduction of Marxism to practice. There are, of course, many. *Humanum est errare*.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

What Do We Get From Theism?

Mr. A. D. Howell Smith (in the July issue) asks what we get from Theism. May I attempt to answer him? And may I, right at the beginning, make plain that, although my upbringing was, in the main, an orthodox Christian one, I have never, at any time believed in Hell. I have always believed that all living creatures are immortal, and that any punishment which there may be in the next world will be temporary and limited. It is necessary to insist on this, since humanists so often seem to single out the worst types of religion for criticism and ignore the better.

In the first place, Theism gives us a logical basis for ethics. No doubt a considerable measure of altruism is natural to human

beings, but natural impulse is an extraordinarily shifting basis for ethics. Impulse is too deeply modifiable, especially in early childhood. If the Nazis had won the war, the majority of human beings might have been trained from childhood to be monsters of cruelty. Would the humanist begin to consider cruelty good, at the point at which it became supported by majority opinion? And if not, how would he justify his resistance to the majority of his fellow-men?

Besides, if there is no God, and no life after death, does it matter in the least what anybody does? To whom does it matter? To us, who are "alive" just now, but who will soon be exactly the same as if we had never existed? To our descendants, who are essentially nothing just as we are? Some humanists try to overcome the difficulty by exalting the race over the individual.¹ But millions of nothings are still nothing, and in the meantime the practical effect of over-valuing the race is often to produce a cynical disregard of the individual's welfare.

In the second place, Theism gives us what I am tempted simply to call heightened spirituality, but what can I think be analyzed into an increased development of tender emotion and an interest in the problem of the universe. The religious person never lacks a love-object.

God is always present as an object of devotion and tenderness, even when human beings are absent. In addition, human love and friendship have more significance to the religious person, who looks forward to eternal attachments than to the humanist, to whom spouse and child and friend are merely temporary patterns taken up by dust.

Mr. Howell Smith writes that "reflections on the destiny of mankind do not really disturb the current of our lives." (Either he has never been a sensitive adolescent, or he has forgotten what it was like.) The humanist, if he is to be reasonably happy, must concentrate on everyday affairs and shut out the problem of the universe, lest he become aware of the futility of life. The religious tradition has, on the other hand, educated many not specially sensitive or intelligent people to take at least some interest in ultimate things.

In the third place there seems to be some evidence that Theism gives the individual courage to stand alone for his own inner sense of right and wrong, whereas humanists and materialists often seem amazingly dependent on a group. The Communist can die bravely in the belief that history is on his side, but he depends heavily on the Party for his opinions. Jesus, on the other hand, seems to have planned and achieved his own death for reasons which not

¹See for example, R. B. Cattell as quoted by Flügel on 275-9 of "Man, Morals and Society."

one other human being really understood. In our own time we have Victor Gollancz, who has repeatedly fought for unpopular opinions from inner religious conviction.

JANE DARROCH

[No doubt humanists will have ready answers in their own minds to Dr. Darroch's arguments. There are two points of fact about the humanist's position, however, which should be stated in connection with her letter. (1) Theism offers advantages and also disadvantages: the humanist stands on his rejection of theism as untrue, not on an opinion of its usefulness. (2) Humanists do not take natural impulse as the basis of ethics (except in so far as it is the basis of all human life), nor majority opinion. Obviously both are important elements in any morality. Two thousand years of inconclusive discussion shows the difficulties of providing a logical basis for ethical theory, and they are more stubborn than probably most humanists are aware of, just as the validity of induction is more doubtful than most scientists recognize, and all our knowledge is ultimately open to epistemological question. Theism seems to be doing grand service in the ethical field, until one recognizes the problems it is creating. One may borrow money to pay debts, and feel very happy; but one is not made materially better off by mistaking liabilities for assets. For all the intellectual difficulties (not in principle insurmountable), ethics has an independent historical reality. Finally, the following letter from Admiral Weston is not irrelevant on the point of moral courage.

H.J.B.]

Religion and the Child

In reference to Mr. John Rowland's communication under above heading in your issue of July, 1947, judging from experience with my three children, two girls and one boy, now all grown up, Mr. Rowland's anxiety is not well founded.

My three children began their school life in a special school in England where no religious instruction was given, but eighteen months later, owing to change of residence, they had to go to a school giving such instruction; then, when 9, 12 and 16 years of age respectively, they attended schools in the Orange Free State and at Cape Town for three years when they again left Africa. In both England and South Africa they withdrew during the period of religious instruction, but my wife told me—I was away—that on no occasion did the children remark upon the peculiarity of their position at school, although they were the only children to retire.

I have always thought that providing children feel that to withdraw from the class during religious instruction is in accordance

with the principles of their upbringing, the withdrawal is rather beneficial than otherwise, because it teaches them not to follow customs without analyzing their import and to stand by their opinion, however peculiar it might appear to others, and, if necessary to endure obloquy, which inculcates moral courage, a rather rare virtue.

That seems certainly to have been the effect on my children; it made it easy, as they grew up, to ignore customs and traditions that appeared irrational to them, with the result that they do not smoke, drink, gamble, paint and powder their faces, follow fashion, resort to beauty and hairdressing saloons, but on the other hand attend to their health by natural means and undertake tasks regarded as unusual, unsuited to women or dangerous; in short whatever their taste and conscience impel them to do which they regard as rational, they undertake irrespective of what anybody might think, say or do about it, which is a good deal better than the monkeying and parroting indulged in by such a large section of the community.

J. WESTON

PHILOSOPHY IN EPIGRAM

"Man has no nature, what he has is . . . history."

—ORTEGA Y GASSET.

". . . the instability of evil is the moral order in the world."

—A. N. WHITEHEAD.

"The ultimate objects of knowledge are guided processes of change."

—JOHN DEWEY.

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